

Testimony for Hearing on HB 5142 HB 5143- April 18, 2006:

What happens today under current law when a gun owner shoots someone breaking into his home with the obvious intent of inflicting bodily harm? If it is an obvious case of self-defense? Nothing. If there is a doubt, the police have legal channels and a process to work through. This process is indeed an inconvenient, unpleasant experience for someone who was only trying to defend himself or his family. But if we are to live in a civil society-a society that values human life-we must place the sanctity of life above the inconvenience of any citizen. In the final analysis- a gun owner's decision to shoot and kill another human being is HUGE. The act should, at the very least, be scrutinized and subjected to the process of our judicial system. Giving a citizen immunity with no accountability for this momentous decision, flies in the face of civility. When a gun-owner shoots someone it's not just the alleged criminal whose life is at stake. We know too many sad stories of bystanders, including innocent children, who get caught in the cross-fire. Under these bills those innocent bystanders will have no legal recourse.

As a teacher I tell children to think before they act and be ready to accept the consequences for their actions. When a citizen purchases a gun and decides to shoot it, they should be held to the highest possible standard when it comes to facing those consequences. In this country we have the right to own a gun and use it to protect ourselves and our families. Not many would hesitate to do so if given that hypothetical worst-case scenario. But the aftermath of this life-saving decision – a RIGHT many hold so dear- is the RESPONSIBILITY to accept the consequences. Not to do so would diminish the importance of all of our lives, not just that of the criminal.

I believe HB 5142 and HB 5143 will damage my community. I don't wish to live in a state where citizens can legally kill other citizens. Why the sudden need to pass these bills? Is there a long list of law-abiding citizens who have been prosecuted for defending themselves? To coin a phrase the NRA is fond of using: Let's enforce the laws we already have.

When highly trained police officers are investigated each time they use their gun, it seems absurd that a civilian who uses a gun for the same reason should be allowed to merely claim feeling threatened and be allowed to carry on without scrutiny. The very LEAST we should expect from our civilian population is accountability for taking a life.

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